



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA Metropolitan Planning Organization

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

**Minutes of November 21, 2002
1:30 p.m. Greensboro, NC
Blue Room (County Commissioners' Briefing Room)
Old Guilford County Courthouse**

ATTENDANCE

Jim Westmoreland	GDOT/TCC Chair	Libby James	GTA/GDOT
Tyler Meyer	GDOT	Jerry Dudeck	NCDOT
Mark Kirstner	Guilford County Planning	Craig McKinney	GDOT
Scott Rhine	PART	Paul Worley	NCDOT
S. Frank Wyatt	Greensboro Eng. & Inspections	Mike Mills	NCDOT Division 7
Craig Newton	NCDOT	Jeff Sovich	GDOT
Richard Atkins	Wilbur Smith Associates	Carrie Reeves	GDOT
Allen Purser	Greensboro Chamber of Commerce		

Jim Westmoreland called the meeting to order at 1:37 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes of October 30, 2002

Jim Westmoreland requested that the minutes be amended to reflect S. Frank Wyatt as being with the Engineering and Inspections Department and Tom Martin as being with the Greensboro Planning Department. Frank Wyatt moved for the approval of the amended October 30, 2002 minutes. Scott Rhine seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

2. Resolution of Support for TIP Amendments

Tyler Meyer stated that this action item is related to two projects: the Gallimore Dairy Road widening project and the U.S. 29 / Eckerson Road project. The action requests the TAC endorse this resolution of support for future amendments adding these projects to the TIP. The Gallimore Dairy Road project includes the section of Gallimore Dairy Road between International Drive and Market Street north of I-40. The project is scheduled for construction to begin in 2008. He also stated that the City of Greensboro is going to fund this segment of the project to complete it prior to the scheduled construction date. As funds become available under the TIP, the city will then be reimbursed that cost with interest. Mike Mills added that the right-of-way acquisition on the Gallimore Dairy Road project should start in December.

The second project supported by this resolution is the U.S. 29 / Eckerson Road project. This project would study the feasibility of constructing an interchange on U.S. 29 at Eckerson Road, instead of the currently proposed grade separation. The project has been developed in collaboration with NCDOT. The NCDOT Division 7 and GDOT would be involved in conducting the study.

The requested action is to approve this resolution, supporting future amendment of the TIP to add these projects. Jerry Dudeck asked if there would be any air quality conformity implications. Tyler Meyer stated there would be none. Jim Westmoreland asked for a motion to recommend to the TAC, approval of the resolution supporting future TIP amendments. Libby James moved for the approval. Frank Wyatt seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Tyler Meyer stated that the draft MTIP development process is underway. A public meeting is scheduled for December 10th, 2002, which would allow members and the public to review the draft MTIP and related issues. At the next MPO meeting, which is scheduled for December 18th, a more in-depth report will be presented, including a review of the draft document. December's report will also include a review of the policy options in the area of STP-DA funds. The next stage in the process will be to schedule a negotiation session with NCDOT, which should be held in January or February of 2003.

3. Rockingham County Priorities for the MTIP

Tyler Meyer commented that Rockingham County's top two roadway investment priorities are in the MPO: the NC 68 / U.S. 220 Connector and the Northern Urban Loop. This relates to the enhanced access that these facilities will offer to Rockingham County. Jim Westmoreland added that Rockingham County is a member of the Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Organization. He also noted that it would be helpful for the MPO to share information about TCC and TAC meetings with Rockingham County.

4. NC Rail Improvement Program and Speed Change Report

Paul Worley reported on the NC Rail Improvement program. This involves a partnership between NCDOT, the North Carolina Railroad, and Norfolk Southern. State and federal funds support the improvements. The North Carolina Railroad owns the corridor and is responsible for oversight, capital planning, right-of-way management, and right-of-way acquisition. Norfolk Southern has been involved in field engineering, dealing with the curves, and streamlining construction and maintenance. The project's goals include increasing speed and capacity, with a goal of raising average speed from 47 mph to 65 mph with a top speed of 79 mph. A centralized traffic control system has been implemented which will enable proper operation at increased speeds and provides numerous additional safety features. The project also includes lengthening passing sidings, reconstructing rail interchanges and super-elevations

on curves to improve high-speed handling. Phase I of the project should be completed in 2003. Constant warning-time signal devices will also be part of the project. This would be implemented on all public crossings and would include crossing lights and gates. This would provide consistency and reliability for freight traffic, and improve motorist safety. Future improvement projects include upgrading 37 miles of single track to double track between Greensboro and Charlotte and extended passing sidings between Selma and Raleigh are planned.

Tyler Meyer asked when the project would be completed. Paul Worley stated that it will depend on fund availability. Jim Westmoreland asked what the passenger rail ridership figure is for the Piedmont Triad area. Craig Newton stated that the Greensboro station has the third largest ridership in North Carolina.

Paul Worley then reviewed traffic separation study program. This goal of this program is to improve 3,000 miles of track in the state by improving or eliminating unsafe railroad crossings.

- The study phase includes: drafting study recommendations, meeting with municipalities, initiating public involvement, coordinating with the railroad, reviewing municipality recommendations and presenting a summary of recommendations to city councils or sub-committees. This provides a comprehensive evaluation of public crossing issues on the rail sections under study. As part of this effort, fifty-six crossings have been closed since 1992 between Selma and Charlotte. A traffic separation study process has been initiated in west Greensboro and east Greensboro to Gibsonville. The MPO will be involved as this effort progresses. A private crossing safety initiative intended to close or make changes to 47 crossings from Raleigh to Charlotte is also in progress.
- The implementation phase includes: receiving concurrence for crossing closures, determining an approach for handling environmental aspects, and designing signals and parallel roads. He also advised that 6 traffic separation studies have been completed throughout the state.

Paul Worley illustrated the NC Rail Improvement project. He advised that the project is the result of a three-way partnership between the NCDOT, the North Carolina Railroad, and the Norfolk Southern Railroad. NCDOT is using state funds from the North Carolina Railroad along with federal funds to construct the improvements, and Norfolk Southern is developing the final design for the construction.

Tyler Meyer noted that the sealed corridor-crossing program has received national accolades and is an example of how state departments of transportation should conduct business on this issue. Paul Worley advised that Congress has asked USDOT to conduct a validity study of the findings. The study that the improvements made thus far have been effective in reducing auto crash rates and improving motorist safety at the affected crossings.

5. MMTC Rail Facility Improvements

Craig Newton illustrated Phase II of the MMTC. Southern Railroad originally built three passenger platforms at the Greensboro Depot, serving six tracks. This did not include a platform for the H line. The entrance to the station is 15 feet below the level of the railroad tracks, requiring a tunnel under tracks for passengers to access the platforms. A separate tunnel will be built for loading and unloading baggage. The renovated MMTC will have two passenger platforms with canopies to serve the rail lines. The platforms are 800 feet and 1200 feet in length, each with a canopy half its length. Elevators, escalators, and stairways will be built to serve all passengers. There will also be a ramp built for mail handling services. The budget for Phase II is \$11 million. The state would pay 100% of the project. The city would be responsible for owning and maintaining the facility. The city and state would be able

to enter into an agreement with a passenger rail provider to help pay for the rent of their part of the facility. The city would provide a contact person throughout the project to help with city permitting and to make certain the building is constructed in accordance with the city's standards.

The plans have been submitted to the city for preliminary review and will be finalized in December. They will be submitted for permitting in early 2003 and bidding will begin with the Division of Highways as early as February or March of 2003. The project duration should be approximately two years, and the state's contractor would perform the work.

6. MPO Boundary, Structure and Governance Review

Tyler Meyer noted this review is in progress. Certain elements are complete. The report should be available for review and action in December. Also, the regional TCC Chairs Committee will hold their first meeting on December 2nd, 2002. The mandate for this group is to explore ways to institutionalize and strengthen existing regional cooperative arrangements. They will also consider issues associated with MPO consolidation or federation. The findings of this group will be reported to TAC when complete.

7. Other Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer stated that the Early Action Compact is a process through which the EPA may provide a degree of flexibility in implementation of the new national ambient air quality 8-hour ozone standard. The EAC is an option available to areas that are currently in attainment or have prospects of reaching attainment status by 2007. Although all air-quality non-attainment designations for the new ozone standard will be made by April 15, 2004, this provision allows EPA to defer implementation of the designations until 2007 for these areas.

The Piedmont Triad COG and the Western Piedmont COG are circulating materials to their member counties and municipalities for consideration. This is an opportunity for our area to have the effects of the 8-hour ozone standard deferred to 2007.

Scott Rhine asked if any communication was received from the COGs. Tyler Meyer said that he have investigated the matter, but had not received prior notice from either COG

Tyler Meyer also noted that the new Greensboro Sidewalk Ordinance was up for a City Council vote 12/3.

Other Items

1. TCC Member Update

Scott Rhine stated that there will be a celebration for the opening of the bus transfer station on November 22, 2003 at 10:30 a.m. Several prominent spokespeople will be speaking at the ceremony including Howard Coble and Doug Galyon.

Approximately 175 people attended the Airport Area Transportation Study public drop-in meeting. Several attendees shared their concerns and comments about the various alternatives presented.

Libby James advised that the first meeting of the Steering Committee for GTA's Long Range Public Transit Plan would be held next week. They hope to bring a full report on the planning process to the TCC in December.

Mike Mills reported that the section I-40 from High Point Road to Chimney Rock Road has three lanes open in both directions. The third lane eastbound from Sandy Ridge Road to Chimney Rock Road will be open by morning. The westbound side should be completed by the first of the year.

The TCC adjourned at 2:58 p.m.